

Dear FCC. This is my comment to the NPRM : INTERSTATE PAY-PER-CALL AND OTHER INFORMATION SERVICES, AND TOLL-FREE NUMBER USAGE. (DA No. 04-3320). (Dkt No 04-244).

The steps that need to be taken with Pay Per Call services in the US are in the areas of improved transport pricing, 900 number portability, billing and authentication and options for use of revenue sharing arrangements. There are technologies currently available and others waiting to be created that will help improve these areas, which in turn will improve consumer and business protection for 900 other audiotex services.

The current costs for 900 transport are high and access to 900 numbers in the US is very limited which are contributory to the decline in 900 usage. Contrary to the cost reductions seen across the board in US telecommunications in the past several years, 900 transport costs have increased, adding to the cost and expense burden for both businesses and consumers. The range of US 900 numbers available appears to be substantial when reading the list on NANPA, but if one wanted to get a 900 number to use for a US application today, it would be a challenge. Neither ATT nor Sprint offers 900 services, according to their websites. It is difficult to locate a sales representative at MCI to get 900 service. Many of the 900 owners on the NANPA list are no longer in business. If 900 numbers were transportable, then access could be sold to interested carriers, without the substantial start up burdens associated with US access.

The billing burdens are substantial and over the past few years they have had a large negative affect on the businesses that use 900 services. Those billing issues include: 1. Caller authentication, 2. Caller credits, 3. Non universal billing thresholds 4. Content and price cap limitations by the 900 carriers 5. Revenue sharing alternatives

The first issue is the authentication of the caller as the subscriber or a person who has permission as the subscriber. The second level of authentication is age. The collection for these calls is often challenged by the subscriber and without the ability to properly authenticate, the billing/collection agencies often credit the calls. If easy authentication processes were put in place and adhered to, the collection burdens would be decreased. For audiotex traffic, perhaps a voice recording could be used. For data calls perhaps a simple electronic contract or a via tracked IP address. If the process did not work, the first time forgiveness policy should be put in place. However, the forgiveness should not be reused, as is often the case.

Caller Credits have been handed out generously to consumers by the LECs and the Long Distance Carriers. Users know this and continue to use 900 services, complain and get credit. This action hurts the businesses launching the services since the businesses still pay the LECS and LD carriers for the 900 transport, billing and collection fees along with set up charges and T1 interconnection fees.

Non- universal caller cost thresholds hurt individual businesses using 900 numbers. Even though the business may enact caller thresholds, the 900 users can call a variety of numbers and ring up huge bills which are often summarily "credited" by the billing companies. There needs to be a

universal threshold that measures usage across all 900 numbers OR credits should not be given to the callers.

Regardless of the authentication processes, the 900 carrier dictates the content and the maximum prices that can be charged per minute for those . If reasonable authentication could take place, then the content and cost determinations should be made by the businesses, not the carriers.

In light of the idea that the cost of Long Distance service does not need to be justified by filing costs and tariffs and that the price a user pays is often set by what the market will bear, then the use of revenue sharing for information services could and should follow the same logic. Cost should be a market driven element, that is, driven by what the caller is willing to pay. Those calls should maintain TDDRA advertising guidelines. So if that is the case, why not use revenue sharing arrangements to replace a system that is fraught with billing and collection issues.

Additionally, telephone commissioned based payments have been around for a long time in the areas of Operator Assisted Calls, Pay phones, hotel, motel , college and prison calling arrangements. Commissioned or revenue sharing arrangements do work successfully without gauging the callers and allowing the carriers to bill and collect easily.

900 calling needs to be revived. It is on it's last breadth. Without substantial cooperation from the carriers (landline and wireless) and the FTC the pay per call service will surely die.

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04-244
<DATE>

11/15/04
<NAME> Marilyn Fox
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<DIV>This is my comment to the NPRM
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